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135 Call hotline to report abuse

Lt. Governor André Bauer would like to remind South Carolina seniors that the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging's I-CARE (Insurance Counseling Referral for Elders) Medicare insurance counseling program can be an effective ally for seniors in stopping abusive or fraudulent marketing of private Medicare plans in South Carolina.

"Our I-CARE program staff and trained volunteers helped literally thousands of people make complex decisions about their Medicare insurance coverage during the rollout of the Part D drug benefit and the new 'Medicare Advantage' plans and I want to remind people that I-CARE can also be

the go-to place for help for anyone who thinks they might be the victim of high pressure or even illegal sales tactics related to Medicare plan marketing," said Lt. Governor Bauer. "We will help you get those complaints in front of the right people at Medicare or at our State Insurance Department."

Prompted by numerous complaints about abusive marketing practices connected to Medicare Advantage private fee for service (PFFS) plans, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced a voluntary moratorium last month on the selling of these plans by the seven largest insurance companies that offer them.

While anyone can make a complaint directly to Medicare or to the South Carolina Department of Insurance, the process for doing so isn't always well understood by the general public.

Reporting problems to I-CARE staff in the Lt. Governor's Office in Columbia can help facilitate the process, as well as providing state and federal leaders with a more accurate picture of the number and type of problems that are being reported.

Seniors and their families can contact the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging via a toll-free hotline to report suspected marketing abuses at 1-800-868-9095.